

I have had a bike for as long as I can remember...not the same bike, of course. I can still remember learning to ride a bike on the empty gravel road that ran past my family's farm. It was a safe place as cars almost never drove past and if they did, the occupants would slow down to wave. To me, my bike meant freedom when I was a kid.

The first place I rode was to one of the horse farms down the road to hang on to the fence and stare longingly at the beautiful creatures that would stare at me pondering whether I might have brought a carrot. They never did come to find out and I always wondered why. One time I touched the wrong cable and was thrown back into the ditch, flat on my back with the wind knocked out of me and hands tingling. Mystery solved.

As I grew older, the bikes changed. I still remember my first 10 speed. Too big for me, with curved racer handlebars that forced me to lean far over, head bent to the wind. I flew through the streets. I thought I was so cool. That bike, however, gave me a freedom I would never have known without it. I cycled myself to the water one day and discovered a canoe club. I joined. I spent my summers cycling to the canoe club, kayaking and bruising my knees at the mercy of the war canoes. Some of my best memories come from those summers. Neither parent ever drove me there and I would never have joined if I didn't have my bike.

Today, I still have a bike, as do my kids. In the summers, some of our favourite activities are connected to our bikes. We travel as far as we can each summer, looking for new playgrounds that might offer different equipment and new challenges. We cycle to all the pools that we can and try them all out. Each year, we are able to cycle further and there are plans to go on a bike trip one day.

I tell my 12 year old that her bike is her ticket to freedom. Go explore, I say. She is tentative, but is slowly exploring. There is a sailing club and a community centre that supplies ocean kayaks. I am hoping she finds her way there sometime in the future. And if not there, somewhere else that belongs just to her.

{linkr:related;keywords:bike;exclude:96;limit:5;title:If+you+like+this%2C+try+these}